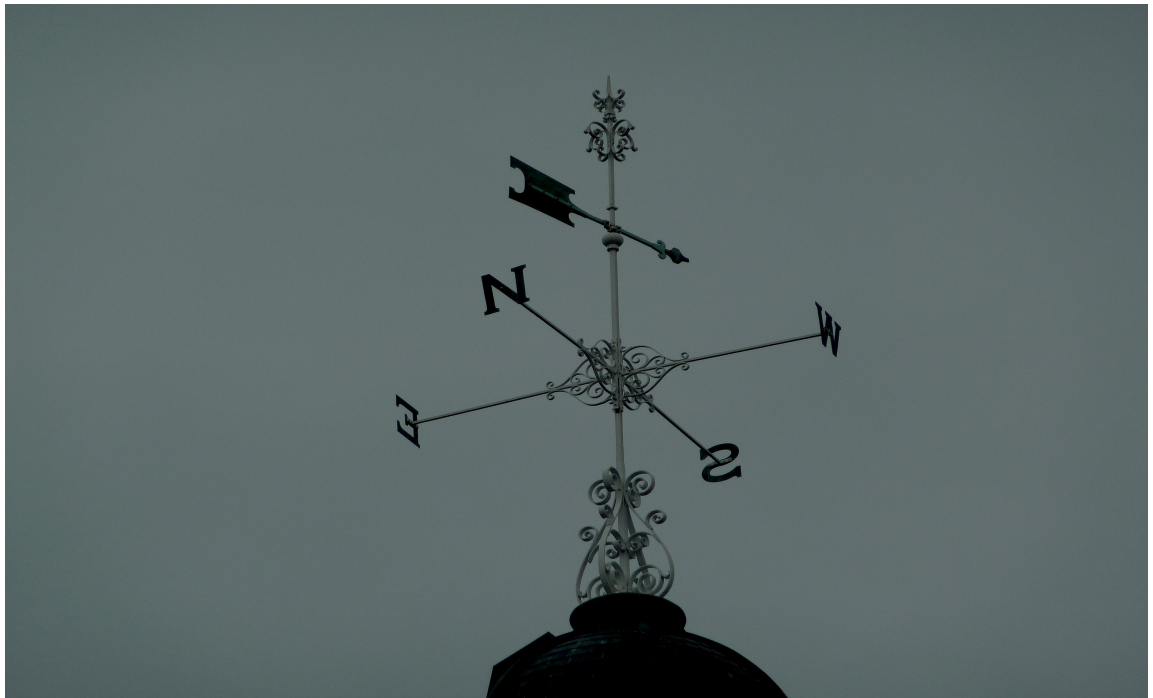


Lesley Battler | Journal | 1981



Journal archive project

Introduction

As a young reader i was fascinated by diaries, journals, notebooks of all kinds. Perhaps part of that attraction was that they seemed a way of telling your own story, remaking the world as you went on. “They” never have the final say in your journal.

I grew up in a family that was shattered by mental illness and writing in a journal was a discipline and a way of keeping myself together; proof I could build an independent life. I was never big on recording my most intimate feelings or expressing myself. For me, the journal existed to help me let go and move beyond the emotional, interior world. I was so much more interested in recording the flora and fauna of the mundane. Daily life was exotic to me.

From the 1980s and on into the Naughts, I wrote in a journal, which I eventually transcribed into electronic format as a project to keep me occupied during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. At first it felt like a self-indulgent pastime, certainly a little irrelevant considering world-events, but as I continued I started feeling maybe there was some value to the project. I decided to preserve them as archives, format them as PDFs and release them onto the Internet where anyone can search, download and use any of the material for projects of their own.

To me, this journal is really an archive, portrait of an era as seen by one insignificant person. It's the insignificance that is truly key here. I love the archives and records of the invisible lives that accumulate into social zeitgeists. Being a journal, it's hit-and-miss what I wrote about, or had time to write about. Huge chunks of my life never made it to the page while there may be hundreds of words devoted to a movie I enjoyed on a hot summer night. I have not added any narrative arc or changed names to keep the journal as intact as possible.

In such a long time span the journal volumes reveal a generation trying to find their way in the world; me and so many of my friends and acquaintances working contract jobs, going to community colleges to learn vocational skills. Spoiler alert: societal change, turbulence, employment issues, generational conflict were just as strong then as they are now. While transcribing the journals I also became fascinated by the rhythm of daily life, how periods of calm so often erupt into times of intense change.

I have taken the original journals and reformatted them into chronological years that begin in January and end in December, and I have included a synopsis with each one to provide a little context. I preserved as much as possible the style and quirks of the original handwritten journals and only employed some light editing to correct place names, and obvious mis-spellings.

These volumes are meant for anyone who is interested in the 1980s and 1990s, in archives, in the lives of young people trying to find a place in the world, in personal impressions of socio-economic-cultural events. This, of course, includes the introduction of the Internet to our daily lives. Please feel free to browse, reuse, recycle any of this material for your own projects. After all this time I still believe information wants to be free.

Volume 1, 1981

I leave Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) and move to Montréal – Taking night classes to finish my BA – Drawn into a plot to fire a professor – The difficulty of maintaining friendships during uncertain times – Dances with Moonies – Return to Ontario – Local news – Living in a provincial park – Grey Havens.

Lesley Battler journal | 1981

[March 1981]

“O dolphin sea
let the tides beat in my temple
beat the drums beat the drums
against the cold sleep of rocks
-Henry Beissel (excerpt from *Cantos North*, 1980?)

**

“Is it a kind of shadow
reaching into the night
wandering over the hills unseen
or is it a dream”
-Art Garfunkel

**

Something fluid and receptive about the day. Water in the air, gentle mist. There is something austere about me tonight, almost saturnine, except I'm feeling too much inner emotion. I am lost. I don't know what to do, what to say to anyone any more. I'm just an outsider looking in. I've never been able to truly believe in God, no matter how hard I wanted to, how hard I tried. I see and experience too much, things no one ever talks about. I can feel shadows, every nuance, shift in colour, tone. The sense of loss, of tragedy, of powerlessness.

**

“Now ordinary people are born forwards in time. This makes it quite easy for the ordinary people to live. But I, unfortunately, was born at the wrong end of time and I have to live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind. Some people call it having second sight.”

- TH White

**

Finally saw *Fantasia* at Cinema V with Fred and Boot. I think it's the only Disney movie I've never seen. Recommended by the Fish, of course. I wish I could be part of the scene at the end where a whole line of people with lights walking through blue mist, walking with faith and courage and conviction. The underwater scenes beautiful; the walk back to the Metro unearthly.

Smell of water and spring. Earlier, I heard sea gulls and saw soft spring light in the sky. Made me feel nostalgic and restless. The neighbourhood was quiet, broad streets, bright lights, plain white buildings and old apartments with black zigzag fire escapes. Litter rustling in the wind. Sense of water in the air. Felt like being in a large, rather desolate city, something like Jacksonville Florida, somewhere at the end of a continent.

**

Dreamed I was sitting on a *Field and Stream* magazine in the middle of a lake. Then I dreamed that I had to cross a large lake or sea in an inner tube to get to work/school. I was with a large group of people, including Chris Hopwood. Enjoyed that dream – it was fun.

April 7

Year-end wine and cheese party in Creative Writing class today. Talked a lot with Shelli, Cindy, Shirley and my favourite, Rhonda. It was more wine and cheese bedlam than a party. The prof (Terry Byrnes) actually told us to shut up. Shelli's a sweet kid. Nothing to say to the bully, Joyce Myerson Arduini. Wish I could have got to know Naomi, the one person in that class who has talent. She's the real writer among us whereas JMA is just a blowhard. I got Rhonda Rique's phone number. I like her a lot and hope we can become friends.

**

Dreamed I lived on a farm, a TV kind of farm, not like my grandparents' farm in Shakespeare, Ont. There was a field beside the farm with trees, and all sorts of animals lived there. Also cats, which is quite important for me to dream about. I know there was a black cat and all sorts of small animals that resembled guinea pigs. In the dream, I had a tyrannical macho father who liked hunting. He wanted to hunt the little animals and I was determined to stop him. I went running around, shooing the animals away, so he couldn't find and shoot them. A boy around my dream-age came over to help me hide the animals from my father. My dream-father was short, brutish and wore a cap. He carried a shotgun but never managed to shoot any of the animals.

I wonder how much of this is a weird version of my grandparents' farm. I don't remember all that much about the farm in Shakespeare, a backyard with an old metal tub, fields with long grasses, how they always looked so bleak to me, stretching out for miles and miles, although it wasn't that big. The weather always seemed overcast; I mostly remember being bitten by Skippy the dog while I was swinging.

April 14

Very disturbing dream. Fred, Nancy and I were walking somewhere in dreamworld and we saw a man. Fred and Nancy passed him without comment, but something about the man made me nervous. After F and N passed, the man turned around and stood in front of me. He stated his name and kept standing in front of me, hands on his hips, triumphant expression on his face. I noticed something terrifying about his eyes. He was staring at me, and just kept coming closer. Finally I was able to break his gaze, and ran off to find the others. The three of us tried warning people about this madman, and long after I woke up I could see the man's staring eyes.

**

Watched Jim Mills go to Kingston. He's giving Queen's another chance and has rented a downstairs apartment near campus. I am going to miss him so much.

**

Judy phoned and read the grievance letter she wrote for the Concordia University ombudsman. It seems a little harsh, but is well-written. All the points were lucid and clearly stated. Best of all, she didn't sound like a hothead. Will be meeting with Judy and Doreen at Concordia tomorrow, and I must be nervous about that as Judy was in my dream.

In the first dream we were going to a political fundraising dinner to protest Ronald Reagan. Judy was ranting at Reagan and calling him names. I ended up sitting beside Reagan and Nancy. It was fascinating; I almost feel I know the man personally now, and he's every bit as callous as I had always thought, a suit of clothes with a grin attached to it and a stash of one-liners. His lack of depth and empathy frighten me. In both dream and real worlds.

**

Met Judy, Shelli, Linda and Doreen at the ombudsman's office. They told the ombudsman all they had to say about Professor Byrnes, and I added a few things too, mostly about not understanding the final marks we received in the course. The prof gave them all Cs, and me an A-. None of us has any idea why the difference, especially since a lot of the comments on my work were much more critical. The ombudsman looked at the comments on all our papers and said we had a good case. She told us a few things to expect when we meet with the department head.

**

Meeting at Judy's. Doreen was there. Judy's apartment is comfortable, homey. Judy scares me a bit, but I do like her. There's a lot to her, a lot underneath her feisty persona. I also admire her experience – just the way she moves through the world. She was married twice, both times to racing car drivers.

April 24

Met Judy and Doreen at Concordia. Doreen wants to write children's stories. She does have that quality in her. Yet I find something disturbing about her, something excessive, hostile, forceful, angry. She and Judy are an odd pair. In a way they're both lost souls who can benefit from each other's company. In Doreen's case, Judy gives her a confidante, and also someone who will argue with her. I think Doreen needs an outlet for all that rage. She also needs the affection of someone who likes her for the person she is.

On the other hand, I can see the association as being negative. Being close could reinforce the cool, tough chick personae, e.g., the jokes about smut, fast cars and smoking j's. Judy has more to her than that. She's not half as tough as she likes to let on, and it's too easy not to see the generous, sensitive side. She gave a lot of support to members of the class. Shelli cried after they mutilated her story, and it was Judy who missed her next class to stay with her.

Things didn't go too bad. The department head, Professor Broes, was reasonable and promised re-readings for anyone who requested them. He promised to speak to Mr Byrnes and give us a breakdown of the marks. Neither Judy nor Doreen said anything. I was the only one who spoke. I told him we didn't understand our marks, or how the grades related to the Prof Byrnes's comments.

After the meeting, D and J took off. They didn't even say goodbye to me, or thank me for helping them out. What was that all about anyway? Did they leave me in the lurch because I thought trying to get Terry Byrnes fired was too extreme? All along, did they only want re-reads, and needed my A- to give them credibility? Anyway I feel pretty used. What a chump. I thought I was fighting the good fight; all I was the whole time was a naïve student with a nice ripe A- to manipulate.

I will go to that final meeting with the ombudsman. I still feel we should have been able to understand our grades and the comments written about our work. But in no way am I continuing on the path to firing Prof Byrnes.

April 28

Sir Jefforie called. So nice to hear from him. Same old Sir J. He's going to Dallas for the weekend. We laughed, joked, talked about old times and people we knew from high school. We brought out all our old lines and jokes, and it felt so good. He also said he really enjoyed that night we visited him in Orillia and went riding in his Camaro. My best friend all through school, and in the choir as well. No one in the world like him.

May 1

Val called. Great to hear from her. She has a job in a museum. But why does she think I have so much luck?? I have nothing, no job, no independence, no prospects. But then, our relationship has always been one-sided. When she goes on and on about someone or something, I just listen. Because I am more reserved, I never feel I pull my emotional weight in the relationship. So I try to be more confessional, in the interests of equality, and she tells me to shut up, or makes fun of me.

Anyway, the latest is that her current squeeze Serge is a pervert. After all that bunk he said about marriage not being a natural state for human beings, he admitted to her that he has two sons and a beautiful blond wife. Apparently he goes after women in darkrooms, and racks up big bar tabs. Right from the start I felt a sort of antagonism toward him, but I often feel that way around Val's boytoys.

But her friendship is so valuable to me. She brings me out of the deep freeze, helps me become less inhibited. She holds out her ambitions, problems, dreams, etc. and helps me realize that I'm not isolated, confessing a failure or expressing an opinion is not the end of the world.

**

Scent of chlorine in the Metro today. It was like being in the YWCA. Sounds were muffled, distorted, unreal and futuristic. It was a place time didn't exist, all human emotion was suspended. Mingling of Muzak and the hum of the train. Kind of like being underwater. Only today I felt as if I might drown.

May 20

Went for a walk by the water with Jim. No concept of time when I'm with him; no boundaries. Explored the little brook at the back of the apartment buildings in Dorval. Jim is the only person in the world I can talk to about things that are really meaningful to me – not just mundanities. My world would be a lot smaller and meaner without him.

Fred has removed all the tapes and stuff from his stereo table and has even packed up things on his dresser. Almost burst into tears when I saw the table. Everything is moving so fast, and feels so inexorable.

**

Magical walk with Jim through the Arboretum. Trees wild and sweet in blossom. Stone fences, small hollows. Dancing birch trees. Unearthly light.

**

On the Metro imagining my bookstore. It would be about the size of Cheap Thrills. I would call it the Bat Cave and put up a sign inviting people inside to browse. I'd have a bulletin board where anyone could post. Of course, books. Books on any subject. I'd have regular customers. Maybe I'd even put some of my pastels on the walls. It would also be fun to post drawings by little kids. That would add a lot of colour and light.

**

I guess we really are moving. Voracious boxes.

**

In Kingston. Slept out at our spot by Ivy Lea, hatch open. Stars. We went for a walk, clambering over rocks spotted with colourful lichens and tiny orange flowers. We also stopped and watched ants for a long time. We also saw a swarm of tiny red bugs that looked like baby lady bugs. Fred is one of the few people with whom I can sit and watch ants.

**

Visited Marsha. She looks less feverish, more content. She has even put on some weight. She sounded a lot like the Professor (Janet Guthrie). She has just moved into an apartment with John, but it is nicer than ours – and no Wheezel clutter.

John is nice. He really does seem to care for Marsha and he's a calming, or settling, influence. I can also see him being a bit limiting, or disciplinary. There's still something very poignant about the Wheeze, still a sense of burning the candle at both ends. The four of us went to Mother's with a large group of people. She has such a talent for bringing people together – reminds me of the Pied Piper tootling down a bridge, just picking up followers wherever she goes. Pizza and Raisin Bran for breakfast.

A poem written by Marsha:

“leaves rustled by the wind
coats flapping against wind chilled legs
twigs and branches littering
the walkways
clear cold skies, glob like
moons veiled with a few wisp clouds
leaf filled gutters wet and
treacherous to uncareful feet
sunfilled sky yet no heat felt
trees, now half laden
creaking in high wind
coming home from work
in the expectant half dusk
warming your hands on the toaster
which fills the room with tantalizing smell
of freshly browning bread
feeling the cold inching around window panes and
wandering like wisps of smoke
about the floor
waiting for the bus on a chill
windless night
playing cards with hot drinks
on the table, while the rain
beats against the window sill
hands warm in soft mittens
against cold tingling cheeks”

**

Barrie. I get along so much better with Boot when I'm up here. She can really wear me down when she's visiting Montréal. In Barrie, we can connect on our past relationship. I wish she hadn't been so belligerent with Jim and there are times when I wish she could show her better self more. But there is something that links Boot and me, even though we really aren't compatible.

Dropped by Eastview and saw Mr Beltz. He seemed to be in good spirits – things are looking a bit better for him these days. He had me sit down and asked me what I was doing etc. He always makes me feel sad and sweet. There's a wistful, bittersweet quality to him. I mentioned the Creative Writing class (but not the denouement). He talked about photography. I mentioned that I had lost a lot of confidence in writing, and he told me about losing confidence in his photography. He mentioned hiking with a friend, and how the friend would come up with rolls of film that were incredibly beautiful and he (Mr Beltz) would just come up with all these shitty pictures, that what he took was just a roll of shit. Mr Beltz mentioned that he knows Freeman Patterson.

He asked me if I had come up (to Barrie) for a visit. I said I came up with a friend who was in the area looking for a job as a newspaper photographer. Mr B was not very optimistic, mentioned a "genius photographer" who can't get in anywhere. He then said he couldn't understand the appeal for that sort of profession. I completely agreed, even though the "friend" I mentioned was Fred. Then we somehow started deploring word-processing machines and composing business letters.

Mr B seemed very intrigued by the tangled tales of my educational career, and that I am now about half a course short a BA. His expression was mischievous, though, when he said, "But Bats, that would be such an easy thing to do and get over with."

Then he mentioned that he heard I was married. I chuckled (or made some kind of sound). "Were married," he said with a wry smile. Everything feels so up in the air with Fred, I really didn't know how to describe it so I told Mr Beltz that we were separated and that I had instigated the separation, and that it had been a mistake to get married. Mr Beltz said everyone had probably told me not to do it. Then he said, "Well, better to leave than be left – that's what I always say." One of his more unconvincing jokes. There is definitely pain there.

He joked about girls getting married to become housewives. I laughed and said that wasn't why I did it. He replied, "I would never have expected that of you. That wouldn't have been possible."

When I mentioned the different universities I've gone to to make up courses toward my BA, he said he was all for it, that it was good not to get in a rut. "A rut is a grave with open ends." At one point, I said something along the lines that I didn't have any idea where I was going, I had no direction. He sort of laughed and said I was young. "Wait til you're my age – then you'll be in big trouble. I'm much older than you and I still don't have any direction." Then he said it was a good way to be, that life lost its interest if everyone was set for one direction. That life was so much more interesting that way.

Then he offered me a ride "down the hill where you used to go." When we got to his car, he asked me with one of his little smiles and a wry chuckle, "what's the name of that hill, anyway." He had a big fancy new car, dark red. He was playing an old Ray Materick song – blast from the past. A song I often played in my room, fantasizing about him. I didn't say an about the car, and as if he could read my thoughts, half-teasingly asked if I wasn't interested in "making big money, furs and diamonds and fancy cars." I said no, and that I didn't think I could ever be. Then he said it. "You'd be surprised, but it just sort of gradually creeps up on you." Being with him is like being in an autumn day.

He had to go to the cleaners and pick up a suit to go to a wedding on the weekend. Wedding,s marriages, engagements all seem to be fraught topics for him. I gave him my condolences. He said he hated weddings. I said they were so dull and stuffy. He agreed, and said this time he had to make a toast to the bride. I can see him at that wedding, making with the jokes, quipping away.

He asked me how my old pal Jeff was doing. I said both he and Janet Guthrie were living in Orillia. He asked about Janet, with interest in his voice. I said she was married. He laughed and said that wasn't what he asked. I said things weren't the same between us. Mr B said I didn't like the guy (Ron Pye). I do like Ron, he's a nice man, but he seemed to hold her back. Mr B said things couldn't be the same as when we were sixteen.

I floated my bookstore idea. Mr B told me a story about the owner of Mike's, who never reads anything because he hasn't "got time for that stuff, he's too busy with the dollars and cents." Mr B said that was undoubtedly the kind of bookstore I didn't want. He let me out at the cleaners, talking about how it was a dismal world out there for artists, but said that he was sure "that some day, somehow, you will prevail."

Bittersweet, pungent. I spent the rest of the day trying to walk off memories, yearning, nostalgia, a deep longing to see Sir J, Professor Guthrensky, Chris Hopwood. So very autumnal.

**

Strange time of transition for me. These last couple of weeks have been unreal, nothing quite within my sight. It's like being locked in a Métro station for 2 weeks. That kind of resonant isolation. I am writing this in the dark, lit only by the weird glow of the radio. I feel like a creation out of my own imagination. Spring feels like fall, and everyone reminds me of everyone else.

**

Saw the Professor at Woolworth's in Orillia. Conversation lagged at first. As soon as it picked up and we were starting to relate to each other, she had to go back to work.

**

Spoke to Chris Hopwood on the phone. She sounded listless, at first, but eventually warmed up for a real conversation. She thinks there might be an end in sight to her mysterious sickness. Said she has no more sense of direction than I do, which I found a bit surprising. We reminisced about people. Molly Spearin, who was always so full of life, recently died of cancer! Chris is easy to talk to but religion is inescapable, which always makes me a little uncomfortable. She expressed a heart-felt desire that we could all be with our Heavenly Father, and an end to the bad times. She briefly mentioned going through some bad times in the past. I had never seen her as anything other than one of the perfect christian Hopwoods when we were kids. So glad to know her now.

June 2

Fred back from Burlington (Ontario, that is. Not Vermont).

**

Terrific day with the Professor. We brought out each other's craziness and whimsy the way we did at school. I still think things with Ron seem a bit too comfortable and respectable, but she seems much more spontaneous and herself than she did the last time I saw them. The old magic is there, which I haven't seen since her wedding. We had a picnic at a park. Made all sorts of jokes about cruisers. Went to her parents' place out in Guthrie. Nice time with humorous, homey people.

**

In Toronto. Now I can say I've talked to a Moonie – or maybe I should say I've been talked at by a Moonie. I was sitting on the grass, writing in this journal. A guy approached me, and I noticed a little Unification church card tucked discreetly in the book he was carrying. His name was Martin Hardy, and I was not exactly impressed by either his theology or psychological insight into people.

Because I was writing in a journal, he made himself appear deep, interested in art, music, writing. This was the tack he took with me. He remarked on my Chinese diary. It seems he knew just enough to get me to talk to him. After initial contact, it was like trying to talk to a block of cement. He would tell me things I've known since I was a kid, trying to make himself sound profound. It was like listening to a salesman spiel on subjects that actually interest me. And finally, the Church popped up in the conversation.

Everything he said about the Unification church was a blurb. He bombarded me with meaningless buzzwords, and the really absurd part of all this, is that I could tell he really thinks he's deep, philosophical and was pulling me in with his profundity. About the only thing I retained about his church blather was that the organization is dead-set against communism. In fact, communism is number one on the list of the three biggest problems in the world. I don't think he ever mentioned the other two problems.

I just don't think I have it in me to be religious.

**

More Moonies in Toronto. This time Rosemary and John who swooped upon me as I was lying under a tree reading. Something about reading books really attracts cult members. Rosemary said she was a Capricorn, and she seemed really uncomfortable. Seems that swooping down on people on the spur of the moment wasn't really her cup of tea. She plucked the grass a lot, and every once in a while looked as glassy-eyed as I do when I have to speak in public. John, a self-proclaimed Libra, liked what he was doing and he was a natural people person.

John accompanied me to Moonie Headquarters (or I guess the Unification Center) very close to Kensington Market, where he proceeded to lecture me about God. Talked about psychic experiences. Last time it was arts and culture; today the hook was astrology and psychic experiences. John was more interesting than that last guy, though, and at least he had a sense of humour. He fed me an interesting theory about souls after death. He thinks that spirits go as far as they have evolved with other spirits that have accumulated the same sort of life experiences, and all those souls reside on the same plane. And that Heaven and Hell as two separate places don't actually exist, and God doesn't sit in judgment deciding whether Person X goes to Heaven or Hell. John believes there are many levels, and spirits go to the level where they are most comfortable. He talked about the "spirit-man," how this spirit man retains his life experiences and shows every deed he's done in life.

Moonies think that Jesus was put on earth to fulfill his mission and that he didn't accomplish it. He was not meant to be killed or turned into a sacrifice to mankind. They stress that people are meant to form partnerships and procreate, and this was what God meant for Jesus. Here we go again; marry and have babies. How revolutionary.

His run-down of biblical history was rather fascinating. God tried very hard to prepare his people for the messiah, purifying them through suffering. Abraham made a mistake and the people were punished because they had to evolve through their suffering, enough so that some day, the Son could come and do his work.

Everything happens in spaces of 40 years, and things that happened in history are replicas of things that happened in the Bible. For instance, David. He spread Christianity but was bloodthirsty. Charlemagne came at approximately the same time, only 400(?) years later. So, building to the denouement, John said that according to the cycles of history, the Messiah is already on earth, raising a family and showing the world how to build a stable population. I'm glad I read *Moonwebs*, otherwise I might never have caught on that he was referring to Sun Myung Moon as this Lord of the Advent and Messiah on Earth now.

It was difficult escaping John and Rosemary. They kept trying to convince me to stay for dinner at the centre. They kept pushing me for my phone number, and invited me to Rice Lake for a weekend. Eventually managed to wriggle away from them. Sometimes I'm glad I'm such a slippery sort. Walked back through Kensington Market. Vibrant colours, smells. I love this area of Toronto.

June 8-10

Rainy night in Niagara Falls. Lovely walk with Fred. Soft colours and mist. Feeling the spray on my face. Blue light, crisscrossing shadows in red and black. Rain on the windshield like tiny paw prints. Friendly little hotel room, warm colours. Back to the Falls. Cool spray full of mystery colours, pinks blending into snowy blue, fleeting mauve. Brantford. Slept in a little path that cut through green trees and bushes. Smell of hidden lilacs, a wild forbidden perfume. Back into Toronto last night, driving into a deep cloudy blue sky. The buildings looked delicate against the blueness of the sky. An imaginary city.

June 18

The moves have begun. Fred got a job offer in Burlington. He's a newspaper photographer now. He did it!

**

Moon madness in Orillia. Fred, Boot and I drove up there to talk to the Kays about renting the little house on their property. The house was beautiful, bathed in moonlight, surrounded by swishing trees. Eerie sounds of frogs and crickets. Went to a restaurant in Orillia, almost 2 a.m. One very drunk man slurred sexual innuendos to a group of women ballplayers sitting at the table next to us. A fight broke out in the doorway. Men in some kind of revenge brawl. A tough young woman came in and started arguing with the brawlers. The waitress told her to go somewhere else. "Sandy, this doesn't concern you." The waitress then winked at me and said, "This is better than the drive-in movies." No kidding!

Now on the bus to Ottawa. Val being a sweetheart about Fred, and helping me keep some kind of perspective on the Fish. She may be right that Jim (the Fish) subconsciously doesn't want me to grow, and that when I do he'll lose interest because I won't be someone he can help (control) any more.

**

Back in the Lachine apartment. One of the worst days of my life. Slept with the radio on and stuffed animals around me. Dreamlike, corners filled with shadows. It is not a huge apartment, but it felt so dark and hollow. Uncanny.

**

Reading Georges Simenon is a deceptively simple thing to do. The sentences seem simple but are sharp. The stories are like dreams – nightmares. Undercurrents, things so subtly revealed, they draw you in and affect you on a subliminal level. He excels at building up an ominous atmosphere, until the story becomes a trap and you're caught in its machinations.

**

Fred leaving Burlington for Orillia. He couldn't find a place to live there, and it just seemed as if it wasn't meant to be. I feel a ten ton weight has been lifted off me.

July 6

Fred and I both in Orillia now. Already those last nights in Montreal seem like a nightmare, all the fights with the landlord over breaking the lease; nastiness all around. Stars, bright crescent moon. The little Kay kids helped us move the stuff into the house. Melanie is amazing. She's stronger than I am and mentioned she likes lifting weights and has her own set of bar bells. She's getting a horse for her birthday, which is July. 11. She also brought us drinks and cookies.

Both kids are very affectionate, physically demonstrative. The little boy, Danny, became quite attached to me, holding my hand, wrestling with me, riding piggy-back. In fact, when we left to go to Barrie, Danny started to cry because I was leaving. His mother had to reassure him that I would be back later tonight. It's been a long time since I've had any contact with children!

**

Talk with my mother. She told me my grandmother (her mother) hadn't actually hated me. Apparently it was more a case that she didn't understand me. I was very withdrawn, lived in my own world and had a very deep desire for solitude. I wouldn't come out to see her when she visited. My grandmother was affronted by this and deliberately said things to hurt me. She was resentful because she thought I disliked her and was personally rejecting her by my actions. According to my mother, she was a very critical woman. She had wanted to be a fashion designer, but went into nursing. I had no idea!

July 26

Called Jim. We circled around each other like moths. A friendly, transparent, oddly callous conversation. He told me to do what I thought best. When people say that, it automatically puts them at a distance. Chunks of earth and rock disintegrated and fell away. It was as if I had just met him on the street and gave him a casual summation of the least interesting events imaginable. He was just as glib, responding out of politeness, a pat on the head and a hasty retreat. I didn't hear the real Fish until we said goodbye.

Why do I ever phone people? I always have to stay on the line for such a long time before I get to the real person, before they (whoever it is I am talking to), drop their defenses, put down their bundles of platitudes and anecdotes. As soon as the conversation takes on a rhythm and becomes intimate it's already been an hour and I'm drained and can't even physically stand holding a receiver any longer.

**

Professor phoned. Always gracious, she offered to take us to their church on Sunday mornings, or give us a ride to Barrie if we were going. They go roller skating on Sunday evenings, and she invited us to go with them any time we so desire. The bond between the Professor and me is fragile, but I appreciate its airiness and delicacy. We talked about the Kay children, and we both feel these little ones are a lot more forward than either of us were at that age. The Professor said she used to shrink and try to make herself as unnoticeable as possible, so she wouldn't have to face the people her parents had over to the house. She used to feel awkward and uncomfortable, always thought she was too big.

Went rollerskating with the Professor, Ron and his two girls, Terri and Trudi. Did trios with the Professor and Fred. I was in the middle because I can barely stay on my feet. Trudi reminds me of a young me, her body type, colouring and brown eyes, and a reserved intensity. Went to A&W afterwards, then "cruising" into Couchiching Park. Refreshing regenerative humour.

When we returned to the little house, Fred and I went for a walk along the country roads. Stars out, soft fluid clouds in the sky. Surrounded by dark fields. Car headlights sloped up the hill. Fred, Ginger (the Kays' dog) and I sat by the side of the road, feeling as if we were in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" as the light became brighter, closer, illuminating everything around us. The road, dark grey and pebbly, looked like a riverbed with all the water drained from it. Ginger is a wonderful dog, who often walks with us, and graces us with his gentle sympathetic presence.

**

Jim called collect to talk business with Fred. I got on the phone and asked him to call again, to talk to me. Ten minutes later, he called collect again and talks to Fred.

July 29

Sir Jefforie called and we talked for about an hour. We guffawed and our unleashed all the old jokes, I could almost hear the slashing of fencing swords. He is not communicating with Sharon any more because she wrote him an obnoxious letter demanding to know why he didn't leave the beer store and do something worthwhile with his life. He was not amused and does not want to hear from her again. I don't blame him. She routinely says the same kind of thing to me.

Aug. 3

Accompanied Fred as he went out shooting photographs for *Oshawa This Week*. Tonight he had to photograph bands performing in dark plush bars. The lead singer of the first bar band pranced around, trying to work up some audience participation. She called us "the photographers from *Rolling Stone*." Fred lay on the floor and pointed the camera up at her. She made faces. Later she came up to me, patted me on the knee and said, "You've got a hell of a picture of my fillings, honey."

The next bar was depressing, the kind where men sit and drink all night. We came in with the cameras and some men started clowning around, posing for us, some of them very slurry. The server came over and asked if I had ID. I told her I didn't have it with me, and she patronizingly said she could bring me a soft drink. Fred took pictures of the woman who was playing the piano and singing songs a la Lilli Marlene. A velvet square draped over the piano proclaimed "Rita Hall!" Rita Hall was wearing a peach dress, heavy makeup. Green and purple feathers drooped over her forehead. She looked tired and resigned, rather like Bessie Cameron from Codrington School. But I heard a woman say, "It's so nice to hear these old songs from someone who can really sing them." It made me happy to hear that and I started enjoying Rita Hall's singing as well.

**

Steve Liard is as ever. His partner Connie is a bit of a riddle to me. Her talk is all so shallow, so “cool” and influenced by Steve. Yet I often see a lost expression in her eyes, and I find it hard to reconcile that with the way she expresses herself.

Lovely talk with Chris Hopwood. We talked about highs and lows, and how the Nazarene Church has become shallow, “no meat to it.” She admits she has to conquer a lot of feelings to get herself back to health, finds herself sinking low when there’s no one to talk to or have real fellowship with. I realize how much we really have in common. We’re not opposites at all – I had all the external strife and discord and she experienced the same thing internally.

Jim called. We talked until 2:30. Felt a great load lifted off me. He said he was in Lachine feeling things similar to what I was feeling here in Orillia. Said he felt he was trying to get hold of something very elusive and fleeting and he was driving himself to distraction. He also said I was uplifting.

**

I don’t know how Simenon does it. His descriptions make me feel I am physically there. For example: “Naud, without a word, glanced out of the window at the sky, which by now was tinged with pink. The slates and tiles of the rooftops and one or two paving stones below were still, after a cold night, coated with a translucent film of rime, which was just beginning to melt here and there.” I can feel myself walking those streets, the early dawn and damp chill.

**

Called Rosalind. She sounded so delighted to hear from me – although she is a talented actress! She came up to Orillia on the weekend while we were in Oshawa, visiting wretched Steve and Connie. She visited Janet, and now she’s thinking of riding her bike up here on Monday. The Three Musketeers Ride Again.

Went to Woolworth's. Donned my false nose and moustache and stalked the Professor through the aisles. She burst into laughter and said, "Just a usual Woolworth's customer." Then said she should have just started talking and showing me hundreds of toys as if I were just an ordinary customer. That would have been hilarious. Not so funny is how she's being pestered by a little kid who was caught shoplifting. The kid keeps coming back and putting on a phoney show for her. She's suspicious of him but feels guilty of being suspicious of such a young child.

Something struck me as a bit sad. The Professor and Rosalind went to the Dairy Queen, and Janet felt she had to hide all the evidence and not mention it to Ron and the kids, for fear they might have been upset that they hadn't been invited along. She even won a free sundae coupon and she gave it to Rosalind so the family wouldn't discover she had been there without them.

**

Festival of Praise in the park. I sat for a while to listen to the music. The performers looked antiseptic as if they had all been bleached and sterilized before going on stage. What interested me were the people sitting around me. Some were holding up their hands. A man dressed in cowboy regalia, the woman beside him heavily powdered, both truly enjoying the music. The man was tapping his foot in time to the music and would occasionally sing a few bars. The band played something poignant and a woman, who looked like a tough biker, closed her eyes, sang softly, swayed and crooned, "Jesus is the way." I'm guessing she was newly saved. Also interesting to watch the children. They rode their bikes and played around the bandshell, circling around the music like moths. Just like the Rita Hall concert, I was touched by how something that appears to be kind of tawdry and cynical can bring happiness or at least a meaningful reprieve in people's lives.

Sept. 1-2

Strange phone call from Val, one of the strangest conversations I've ever had. Unfortunately, I mentioned visiting Sharon and Al. Val tormented me for the entire length of the call, repeating that I would no longer be lonely, that I had Sharon, etc etc etc. She sounded so ill-at-ease and responded to everything with a false-cheery oh well. What kind of a person does she think I am? Haven't I been a good friend? I really should have known better than to mention Sharon or Al.

She made it sound as if this will be our last phone call, that we can't be friends any more. I want to be her friend, I've never had such a friendship, I don't ever want to lose it, but I was completely unnerved. The pauses were black holes. It hurts seeing intimacy reduced to platitudes – especially when they are fake in the first place! She even told me to “have a good life.” All because I saw Sharon and Al, and it was just a casual visit. But Sharon and Al together are unforgivable to Val, and I did transgress our friendship by seeing them. Sent flowers to Val. Sometimes I feel as if I am trying to court her. I kind of know how Al felt.

Sept. 3

Boot came to spend the night, as she has to go to the college early in the morning. We trundled around downtown. Just simple goofing around, a good antidote to all this drama with Val and Jim. Cozy evening. Boot slept on the foam mat. She, Fred and I lounged around on it, joking about Roman orgies.

**

Stopped in at Woolworth's and had a nice conversation with the Professor. Things just seem to get curiouser and curiouser. She doesn't know when Ron's birthday is - “likely June or July.” She, Ron and Ron's oldest daughter, Terri, went out on the paddle boats. Janet was so enjoying the quietness and beauty. Then she jokingly said to Terri, “too bad we don't have a radio.” Terri responded seriously that it would be nice, an improvement. Janet felt like groaning.

Then there was the time they went to see the new James Bond movie. She said rather emphatically, “I could live without the James Bond movies.” I have the feeling she’s really floundering in the relationship, unprepared for living with these near teenaged girls. Also, I think she is doing too much for the others and not enough for herself. Her interests don’t seem compatible with theirs. I tend to see this family as Janet and “them.”

**

Rollerskating with the Professor and Ron. My skating has not improved one bit. Talked to the guy who reminds me of CJ when he skates. Quite a nice guy, likes to call himself “Fast Eddie.” The Professor has one of her drawings up at the arena – cartoon of a boy and girl holding hands and rollerskating. It’s nice seeing that – something Professor-ish, when it sometimes seems as if she is being way too subsumed into the relationship.

Went to A&W after skating. She still has dreams about water, which she finds rather horrible. She dreams that she’s on a road that is being washed away by water on both sides. She also dreamed she was standing somewhere, helplessly watching a tidal wave move in.

**

Val called. Started out nasty, like the last call. Superficial. Nasty digs about Sharon. I had the feeling she only called to pump me for information about Al/Sharon. I’m only the messenger, the one everyone kills. Anyway, we ended up having a meaningful conversation and talking about some things that were on our minds. Seems like Jim has set me up as a patsy for his lies and messages of goodwill to Val. He lied to her, told her I said I only wanted her around to have a good time. Good Lord! She could believe that after all those hours pouring out her soul to me at Elrond. Sorry Jim/Val, most of the time I really don’t have a good time with either of you.

He also made me look like a schizophrenic, a completely fractured personality. I feel sick, hurt and betrayed. Why does he keep want to tear me down, turn every high, low (basically every emotion I have), into something pathological? This is not a good friendship.

Still hope I can salvage something with Val, but I have had it with Jim. His manipulation, his playing people off each other, his cattiness(!). The way he divides people, tears them apart. Why does he want me to believe there is something wrong with me? Why is he trying to divide me from my friends? He even called Boot one afternoon. Boot! Is he still playing with her? Enough already.

**

Now is the time to think of real friends and good things. The walks and bike rides to Allandale with Sir Jefforie, his long, deep friendship, hilarious letters. The Professor's wit, talent, largesse – her beautiful world. Rosalind's dramatics. Chris's depth (that remark out of nowhere, "hire a hitman.") Barb P, Michele Vindum, the Nazarene Church, Glen, Eve, Kathy, Janet Bowman. Bernie Smith. People who opened new worlds to me. Mr Beltz and all the transformations that took place, when I became a thinking, feeling, creative person, a person I hadn't been since Mrs Newson.

In grade 5, I danced for Mrs Newson in the gym. We were dancing and I made up a dance. She asked me to do it again for her because she wanted to see it in its entirety. She told them at the parent/teacher meeting I was a gifted child, very creative, gifted, original, talented at art, writing, all fields of expression. She also said I was very "high-strung."

I guess I needed to spiel all this out because I need reassurance. Life will go on, with or without any of these holdovers from Elrond. Would I even keep up with any of them if I wasn't living in isolation in a cabin outside Orillia?

**

In Barrie. Visited Chris. Good, real talk. During our talk, she mentioned how often she would come home from school upset about something, how often she would spout off about something that was unjust or something that hurt her. She had noticed how badly the guys in the choir had treated Jeff, how even Bernie had been cruel. She finds it so easy to feel depressed and discouraged. She talked about her ex-boyfriend, Graham, for the first time. He was the one who broke up the relationship and Chris hadn't wanted to let go. He wrote her, but she never replied, as she couldn't bear getting "just-friend" letters from him.

He's getting married soon, and you could tell by the look in her eyes how she felt. She finally did manage to write him a letter to congratulate him. She got sick of people telling her there was plenty of fish in the sea and the right one was still around the corner.

She said she always felt she had to hide how she really felt about things at the Bible studies – just like me. She also doesn't know how she ever managed to seem so sure of herself to me because she never felt that way. She's looking for a new church, but can't seem to find one. Sighingly said maybe it was because her ideals were too high and she would never find what she wants on earth. Doesn't think life would be worth living without God. I don't think she's ever talked so much about herself. Now this was something real.

**

Easy talk with Sharon. I ended up telling her about Jim – I've been telling everyone about Jim. She even used the same word I did to describe him; catty. Female behaviour in the worst sense of the word. It was gratifying to hear that. She's right, there's a pattern here. First the Boot, then her, then me. He professes to love us, opens worlds to us, believes all he is doing is "helping" us (at the same time making us believe we need help), then deciding he is disillusioned with us, and then the claws come out. I have no interest in being his inferior, or his psychiatric patient. I just miss what I once saw in him.

Sept. 23

Secured the apartment in Whitby, and finally moving day came around. Boot spent the night. Melanie and Danny came over and it was Boot who took them outside and romped around with them. Melanie gave her a big hug and Danny bounced on her knee. I will miss the beauty of our little "Grey Havens." Will be camping, or staying in Barrie until we can move into the Whitby complex.

**

Listened to “The Pink Flamingo Room” on Q107. Feeling very strange, sitting in the car with nothing but disembodied voices on the radio for company, surrounded by the empty shells of other cars. It’s a phone-in show, where people describe their fantasies. Colette described her pink room where she lures men. Someone else talked about how much she likes riding in elevators and what she does when she’s riding in one. So weird, hearing from all these people out there, in rooms, apartments, who knows where. A man called in to say he has collected 4,332 TTC tickets. He does nothing with them, just keeps them in a drawer. Another man described his collection of whips and women. Apparently, he’s had every kind of woman and every kind of whip.

Oct. 1

Went up to our Grey Havens for the last time. I will miss the gingerbread house, the world of magic around me, moonlight in the trees.

In Barrie, my father and Fred were having camera wars. My father put cut eye-holes out of a large paper bag, and put it over his head. It was hilarious. Fred held his flash out like a cross. Then we extolled the virtues of our respective birth months. I waxed very poetically on the glories of October. My father spoke eloquently on how beauteous February is, and we both picked on Fred’s November. What’s to like about the end of November?

**

Called Val back, told her I couldn’t visit her in Ottawa because we had to find a place to stay until we can move into the Whitby apartment. She said something about how she’s sure I’ll have a good time and run into someone. Okay then. Maybe it’s just as well I don’t go this week. I’m going to try for next week though. I really do want to see her.

Oct. 5

Horrible dream about Val. Dreamed I went to Ottawa (although of course, it didn't resemble a real place), and after a while of being pleasant and polite to each other, she started saying hurtful things to me, the kinds of little jabs I've always chosen to overlook. In the dream, I protested and didn't let them go and we ended up in a heated argument. I was getting very angry, until something seemed to shut off and I no longer felt anything at all. I was indifferent. Val continued to jab, and I grew cold and sarcastic. Then we ended up physically fighting, punching each other, yelling. She claimed I owed her all this money for all the things she had done for me, I owed her at least \$900.

I asked her if I had not done things for her as well. She called them paltry, I had only given them so I could keep her friendship and she did not really like any of that junk. She said I had to pay, she would make me pay for all I had taken. I yelled that I had taken nothing. I grabbed her, shook her, yelling, "I've paid. I have paid. I have paid and paid and paid. How long can I go on paying? I've paid all I possibly can. I can't pay any more. No matter how much I pay it's never enough. I HAVE NOTHING LEFT."

I woke up trembling. Not going to Ottawa this weekend either.

Oct 14

Visited the Professor and Ron in Orillia. She seems to be even more down on herself lately, kept referring to herself as "Blobbo." Also seems to think anything that doesn't go as well as it should is "her fault." More dissonances in her relationship with Ron, including a double standard. He is always late to pick her up at Woolworth's. Very often she's the last one waiting there yet when she's late to pick him up, all the lights go off in his store and he stands there looking very forlorn, which then makes her feel guilty.

I tend to idealize Janet and was happy to see this more human side of her. I can see many of her pranks come out of frustration. Instead of getting upset, she turns it into humour. This is why she sometimes goes a bit too far. Hitting out – in her own way. Terri put her jacket on Janet, and Janet made jokes about how "svelte" she looked. She kept making the jokes even though she was annoying Terri. I feel so much for this beloved Professor-friend.

I relate well to Ron now. He is a nice, decent man who laughs at my jokes. While we were at the Dairy Queen, Trudi was finishing up her sundae. All the rest of us started inching closer to her with our long red spoons out ready for attack. I said it was the attack of the Spoon People. This made Ron chuckle. I have to admit though, the harsh light of the DQ and the blackness of the windows did make the scene seem a little Goya-esque.

We left the DQ and parted. We made jokes about how we'd only just begun and now we were splitting up, going on our real search for food. I said I was going to find all the food there was out there and I didn't care how I had to do it. The others laughed and made similar remarks. The evening did seem to have a touch of the macabre about it, though.

**

Worried about my father. There's something compulsive about his behaviour these days. Even his antics seem more manic than usual. Something unpredictable.

Oct. 16-17

Escaped Barrie for a while. Not a moment too soon. I was feeling so crushed, stifled. The Grove Street house felt like a swamp, pressure building, prehistoric plants decaying. Wouldn't be surprised to find the house gone, replaced by a lump of coal.

**

Listening to "The Pink Flamingo Room." People calling in to talk about their greatest fears tonight. I picture a room out there, somewhere in the night where people mingle in pink tuxedos, black shirts, surrealistic ball gowns. This great communication network for all these people scattered around Toronto. I imagine people calling from phone booths, cellars, motel lobbies, connecting to this oblong pink room presided over by Johnny Spadina.

A lot of people have expressed the fear of having to go to war. I don't see how anyone my age or younger could be able to fight a war. We don't have the discipline or conviction to handle a war. All these aimless droves of young people in Canada, the US, the UK – how can anyone even imagine them (us) playing with weapons. We would be clueless, go crazy, or just wreak chaotic violence on the world. I suppose, however, in this era, individuals don't mean that much. All you need is a couple of people to push a couple of buttons. Now that is comforting.

**

Dispiriting phone call from Val. She had been trying to get me all last week. She implied that I was trying to avoid her, and didn't believe I was at home the whole time. Just when I think we are really reaching out to each other and sharing something special, the relationship tanks again. I only made things worse when I tried to explain that the things Jim said I said about her were not true. She became cold and abrupt with me after that.

She wants me to come to Ottawa, but told me to call her back sometime this week, in a tone of voice that implied that she probably wouldn't be hearing from me. There was no warmth in this conversation, only mistrust. She said I'm dishonest when I'm being evasive, that I am giving her the run-around and I am using her.

I guess I don't possess the gift of friendship. I guess I don't give enough, I don't reach out. Either that, or I'm too needy and I use people. I think these calls with Val have happened enough now that I can roll with the punches better. I'm much more detached now. The whole sky isn't obliterated when Val is upset with me and the conversation doesn't connect. I wish I could be a better friend, but clearly I can't do anything right.

Oct. 27

Celebrated two birthdays, mine and Cutler's. Boot, Cutler and I went to the Brookdale. I have always found Cutler so interesting. Maybe it's because underneath the frivolous appearance I can sense a kindred spirit. She was real tonight, not acting "cool," not talking in a monotone. Mentioned a heart murmur, nothing serious. Talked about her friend Al Jacks, a Pisces who is into faith healing. He got into a serious accident, ended up with a concussion, and was able to will himself back to health. Apparently he's always been able to do this. She seemed amazed to hear that people habitually use only 1/10 of their brain power. She's very bright and our conversations are often interesting and meaningful.

A slow song came on. She said she had to go wander off because it was making her feel depressed. She was probably cruising for a man. She fears being alone and aging. She does not want to grow up, is always looking back on her childhood, so wistful when she talks about the past, as if she has lost everything. It's her 20th birthday tomorrow, and says she'll never admit to being older than 19.

Oct. 29

Fred gave me two beautiful blue-green ceramic wine glasses. They are truly lovely. Went to Cutler's house. She gave me a birthday hair cut. She cut it a little too short and was upset about it, but we had a great time making jokes about the hair. Yes, the same kid who used to hang out at Highland Ave all the time, the kid who danced, put plastic bags over her head, tell everyone her life story a thousand times over, and laugh her head off.

Her mother's house is barren, austere, Spartan. Her mother is someone who seems to pride herself on being no-nonsense, plain-spoken, no time for foolishness or needless sensitivities. Rough-tongued and unsparing with Cutler.

Discovered new things about Cutler. Her brother bullies her, has hurt her a lot but she hero-worships him. She has to because otherwise she wouldn't be able to tolerate it. Said she has to believe he's worth the sacrifice. Same with all these guys she goes out with. Her life is always great and exciting because thinking otherwise is too painful for her to bear.

She remembers much more than one would guess at first appearance. I have been surprised several times at the depth of her memory. She recounted the time Nancy and I had snowed her, how it had really hurt. I apologized. I do kind of remember doing that. Nancy! That made me remember how Nancy used to emulate me and how much she delighted me, how much I loved her sense of humour.

Oct. 30

Met Val at bus terminal in Ottawa. She has changed her look. Her hair is very short a la Toronto punque, and her style of makeup has changed. She looks fabulous. She had the evening all planned and conversation revolved around social activities, her classes etc. She now prides herself on her honest, plain-spokenness, and is trying hard not to let people take advantage of her. I don't think the line between honesty and rudeness is all that thin. She accused me of not being able to be honest with anyone. Also: "You didn't entertain me very well last time I visited. I was always looking for books."

Met her friends Derek, Peter Gould and Mike at the Royal Oak, an old English pub. It was really fun at first, but the jokes and one-liners and comedy routines went on all night. Eventually the group split up. Val and I went to get hot chocolate. She was delighted things had gone so well between her and Peter, and we had a nice time together.

She let me read Jim's letter to her. I was stunned. Apparently I am "confused, fluid and unpredictable." What have I ever done to deserve this?! Then I received a birthday card from him, sent to Ottawa via special delivery. Val was very upset. She thought it was for her and opened it.

Oct. 31

Best Halloween party ever at Val's Museum classmate Derek's place. Met some interesting, fun people, and the costumes were terrific. André the Sheik, aka André of Araby, loves the writings of TE Lawrence.

Abdullah, originally from Morocco, now teaches French as a second language. He wrapped orange streamers around my neck and we talked about Montréal and Morocco. A gorilla came by every so often, as well as a huge man dressed in a pink tutu revealing Union Jack underwear. A mysterious Catwoman. French people from Montréal. Alain was gallant, pouring me glasses of Amaretto. We danced for a while, but then he and Val gravitated toward each other. They were hot, vibrant, vital dancing together. She shone tonight – an outpouring of warmth and exuberance. Meanwhile, I danced with the devil, the gorilla and the Russian spy. The party started to break up at 4:30. Cecile invited me to a party in 3 weeks. Damn, I wish I could go.

Val and I very close tonight. She even removed the makeup from my face, confided in me her hopes and dreams for the future.

I think I like Ottawa. From the surface the city looks new, slick, all square buildings, tinted glass and very sobre government offices. But there seems to be a real center of activity that revolves around the market. Artistic people, colourful characters. Occult bookstores. I've seen too many creative and unusual people there to think Ottawa is sterile and dull.

Nov. 10

Phoned Chris Hopwood from Barrie. Lovely conversation. I'm glad we found our way back to each other. She loved the book I gave her for her birthday, and the note I had included. Said it meant a lot to her. I especially liked how so many of the poems expressed the yearning inside people, the desperate drive to merge with something bigger than they are – something I rarely see in Christian poetry. Usually what I see there is schlock. So many angels, so much milk and honey.

I also liked how the poems expressed God's haunting love, how he calls his people, never lets them go, instead keeps them yearning and seeking, desiring to be filled with something that will finally give them peace. Drawing us back to Himself, for without Him, there is only emptiness. Anyway, that is why I liked this book of poems, and I'm so glad Chris understood.

She said she was going to give the Nazarene Church another try because she knows how good it can be. She recognizes that Bob isn't that good a pastor, that his sermons are on a level far below what she needs – but what church isn't? They all talk in generalities. She's going to talk to Bob this week about the church. On a lighter note, she is crazy about a guy named Peter she met at church. One of the reasons she might have been in such a good mood was that she may have a date with him on her birthday (tomorrow).

**

Nancy drove me down to the library. We had a good talk. There's a rapport between us that doesn't exist with Boot. You can't have a meaningful talk about anything with Boot, but it's different with Nancy. Everyone else in the family seems to think Nancy is so sure of herself; Boot calls her a tyrant. She's none of these things. She's actually very humble. She talked about Brian and how she's having problems in math and English and feels bad because her writing style is very poor. I hope we can bridge the age gap and become real friends. I think we have a solid understanding and definitely respect for each other.

Nov. 19

Val told Jim that I am attracted to any man who pays any kind of attention to me. Takes one to know one – or something like that. This coming from the person who never stops talking about men. I think i've realized something about my relationship with Val. I feel very much the same way about her as I do about my mother. I think there's a pattern here. The big thing is the erratic quality to the relationship; one day I'll feel as if we have made a breakthrough, something special has happened that could never happen with anyone else. Next day gone, forgotten. Same thing with Jim, actually. Starting to think Jim is unbalanced and Val is just terribly terribly immature.

**

Moved in to the Whitby apartment. Now the job of unpacking. I'm alone! Alone for the first time in weeks! No Barrie entourage. Drastic drop in temperature. We've arrived just in time.

**

I have never lived in a high rise complex before, never looked out the window and been surrounded by other windows. Lights switch on here and there. Some windows are dark, some are luminous as if a computer chess game is going on. People appear and disappear here.

**

Met Sharon at the Y in Toronto. She is staying there until she finds a place to live. Nice to know I'm not the only one with relationship problems. It seems that in one week Al told her he didn't want to talk to her, and she had heard various conflicting reports about Ernie, the principal at the school where she teaches. Good conversations. I told her how out-of-place I feel in Whitby, surrounded by all the middle-class people. Joked about how someone will show up at the door with a net and take me away. I also ended up telling her about Jim's suicide letters from last year. I shouldn't have said anything about those two to her – now I'm completely drowned in her opinion of them. She mentioned that Jim sent her a note a Christmas, in which he said she was like a giant donut with a cherry on top. Well, all right then!

Marsha arrived came and she was the Wheeze, at her very best, funny, wise, indignant, sensitive, whimsical and just great to be around. They exchanged Christmas presents, and at first I felt awkward. But they didn't make me feel bad at all. I have spent too much time with Val and Jim. This is normal behaviour between 3 friends!

We went out to dinner. Marsha and I ordered wine. Wheeze paid because she had "lots of money." She told me I looked really good, "typically Bat-like." I felt light-hearted, cheerful and glad to be with these friends. Sharon went back to the Y to wait for Al to arrive. Wheeze and I walked down to the beer store, doing "Get Smart" impressions.

We were afraid the beerstore would be closed and when we found it open we shouted, “Hooray Hooray” and capered about. A man passed and laughed. “Yes, ladies, it’s open.” And I said, “And there was much rejoicing.” We got asked for ID. Marsha was indignant but I was rather flattered.

We picked up Sharon, met Al at the subway and went on to Chris Hope and Rob Fullerton’s apartment. An Elrond reunion! Banjos, scythes and a sheep picture on the walls. Rob Fullerton hugged me, Chris shook my hand. Good talk with Rob about the differences between Toronto and Montreal. The big surprise of the evening was a long talk with Al. We reminisced about 910, water fights and backgammon games. Inevitably, the Val-Al-Sharon triangle. I told him my version of the affair. He seemed grateful for my opinion as he had heard two extreme points-of-view and there didn’t seem to be anything in between. We talked about our wedding (Fred and I) and the ensuing soap opera. He told me he thought the whole thing was hilarious. I found out he respects my opinions and outlook on things.

We took the GO train together, he to Pickering, me to Whitby. He read me bits from the play he is acting in for Ajax Theatre Co. He’s playing Prince Charming in *Sleeping Beauty*. He read out the little song he will be singing in the play. He asked me about Fred. I answered honestly about the last year, the job searches in Ontario, the separations and how things are now much more stable. I asked Al about Sharon, and he told me she gave him the boot. We parted, and he said he hoped we could get together soon, he had always liked Fred and me. He offered to drive me into Whitby if the bus was not there, but it was, and we parted on such good terms.

Dec. 11

Harsh letter from Jim. Attempted to call him – got Mr Mills on the phone. He was (and always has been) very nice to me, asked me where I was and how I was getting along. Then he told me that Mrs Mills had had a massive heart attack, and will be out of the hospital in time for Christmas. He said she was all right. I truly hope so. His parents are so nice. Jim was in bed all day, something wrong with his throat, so I did not speak to him.

Dec. 14-15

Dorothy Majesty phoned. I guess I start market research surveying tomorrow. 4.25 an hour. Double shift. They are coming to pick me up tomorrow morning. Doesn't sound promising, but I guess one has to start somewhere. At least surveying isn't selling.

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Unbelievable day. Waited in the Whiteoaks lobby until long after 10:30. A car full of women came and picked me up. All wearing heavy makeup, every single one of them smoking in the car. I was driven into Toronto, not the slightest idea where I was going or what I would be doing. One of the women guzzled cough syrup and went on about her smoker's cough.

The job entailed walking around the mall trying to entice people into participating in a survey designed to measure their reactions to a selection of TV commercials. Worked with Cheryl, who recently turned 19. Most people refused, or walked quickly away from me, exactly as I would have done. I managed to get two people into the booth where I then ran a video of TV commercials and wrote down their responses to questions. Half-hour lunch, half-hour supper. On my feet from 11 straight through to 4:30. Chit-chat with Cheryl. She talked about her favourite heavy metal groups, how she'd rather be canvassing guys, and diet pills she orders from the States.

Sent upstairs to do telephone surveying. Everyone else in the room was high school age. The room was a stable, each one of us in a stall with a telephone and forms to fill. Every single person in that room smoked. All day long I was the only person who did not smoke. After a while, I decided I was happy to be working with the kids. They weren't jaded, and reacted honestly during the calls.

I talked to an old woman for a while. Her husband had just died in August. She was so sweet, and I felt really bad about not being able to talk longer. On another call, a man with an Italian accent answered and I could hear a fight going on in the background. A little kid answered another call and asked if I were Santa Claus.

One call really shook me up, though. I asked for “the lady of the house” (part of the script), and the man on the line answered in a deadly quiet voice. “There is no lady here. She is in her grave. You can’t talk to her.” I just said I was sorry and hung up. I was shaken for a long time.

At 7:00 we had our half-hour supper. Returned to the mall and talked to Cheryl for a while. Kim invited me to sit with them in the food court. Day ended finally at 9:30. After much confusion a group of us, including Cheryl, got a ride with a woman who I never met, as far as her house – maybe in the Ajax area? We were invited into the house. A Doberman charged at us, snapping and snarling. We sat down on a couch and were served coffee, waiting until “Jimmy came in.”

Jimmy eventually arrived and expounded at us all about the miracle aloe vera plant, and all his business deals. While we sat in a row on the couch, he and the woman started haranguing each other, and it sounded for all the world like an act for our benefit. He bellowed and chain-smoked. He and the woman argued about his disreputable business ventures and wild schemes. They were both grandstanding, emoting and gesturing as if reading lines. All that to impress a lowly group of market surveyors?

At one point Cheryl put her head on my shoulders and loudly snored. I joined in and finally, finally Jimmy drove us back to Whitby / Oshawa in a van. The back windows of the van were coated with dust, and they were all smoking, so it seemed as if we were driving through a heavy mist, blurred lights and colours, adding to the strangeness of the day. I staggered in at 11:30 or so, my throat raw.

Dec. 25

To Montreal. Got up early to take the GO bus to to the terminal in downtown Toronto. Sky half light, half cloud. I felt as if I were embarking on a great adventure. When I finally got in at Dorval, Jim was late. I found myself having to listen to this random man go on about how a young woman like myself had to watch out and be careful. “There are a lot of guys out there who are interested in one thing. It is the nature of the male to be interested in that one thing. These guys make promises and don’t keep them, then they go after someone else and make the same promises.” Just then Jim entered in his ski clothes.

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Wonderful to be in Montreal. I love this city so much. The buildings are old, intimate, warm. I want to wander everywhere, check out my old haunts, prowl through all those nooks and crannies, hideouts throughout the city.

Dec. 27

Went out walking by myself. Snowing heavily. Trees lean and black against the spectral whiteness. Tall windows cast shadows over the soft rounded snow. Went for Chinese food, then continued walking feeling like a Russian in my big coat in the snow. Saw someone on the bus reading Apollinaire.

**

Yesterday I watched *La Tete d'Obsidienne* at Jim's – a show about Malraux and Picasso. Rode the buses. Bit of an adventure because things have changed and there are so many more new stations. Of course some of the old routes have changed. Rode the Métro reading Cocteau's *Les Enfants Terribles*. I don't want to go back to the greater Toronto area. I want to live here. The bus became my lunar barque as I weaved in and out of shadows, light, darkness, snowflakes like tiny stars.

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Took the 191 bus. Passed a park in Notre Dame. Trees lean and sinuous, poised in dance positions. Snow a smooth screen for changing shadows. Trees standing so still on one dimension, yet on another dancing and shimmering on the snow. Shadows moving with such grace, fluidity, changing shape, becoming shell-pink then blue, mauve, grey, pink. Christmas lights strung on the balconies of houses. Found books in Montreal that I can't get in Ontario. Simenons and Robbe-Grillet at Cheap Thrills. Picked up Anais Nin's *Collages* at Classics. Alien sounds of the Métro, swoosh of trains. Harsh yet vague light. It was like being inside a waterless aquarium, air full of tiny sounds.

**

Walked through Les Terrasses with Jim. A young woman came up to me. She was very pale and drawn looking, dark eyes, glasses, green coat. She came right up to me, looked very intensely into my eyes and asked me where she would find the Palace Theatre. I can't describe that look! Jim said it looked as if she was either going to give me a long passionate kiss or bite me. When she realized Jim and I were together she hastily said she realized where the theatre was and she went rushing out of Les Terrasses, coat streaming behind her. *Caligula* was the movie playing at the Palace.

I remember the time when I was thirteen and a woman came up to me and took my arm, walking so close my heart started pounding with fear. I could feel her breath on my face, see all the powder on her face, an odd shade of orange, caking in places. Her teeth were slightly discoloured. Small pouchy mouth. The sense of something closing in on me.

**

I did not sleep with Jim or come close to having sex with him. In fact, we are not physically attracted to each other. We talked a lot about it though. He wanted me to confess my "escapades." Escapades?! He is the only thing that comes close to an escapade. He kept tickling me in an attempt to make me talk. We were up all night and slept in most of the day. Didn't leave the motel room until night when we went to Chenoy's and I finally had something to eat. Had that same panicky sense of something closing in on me, something oppressive and crushing.

New Year's Eve

Went to Da Giovanni for spaghetti au gratin. Jim told me he can't feel anything directly, he never directly experiences things the way I do. I don't know how he manages to make me feel inferior, but he always does it. I ended up feeling badly that I experience things the way I do and I'm not more enlightened, or above it all, like he is. It always comes down to that.

He told me I was very very Piscean – albeit an intense one. Said he thought the astrological houses indicated the types of experiences one has in life. I would experience life in much the same way a Pisces would. He has Capricornian experiences, and Fred goes through life like a Gemini. He said I experienced all the things he merely knew, without having to experience. Said he needs to have me around or he doesn't experience any of these things at all.

We walked around one night until I got blisters on my feet. He talked about how he didn't seem to get any pleasure out of anything any more and how cynical and jaundiced he is becoming. What happened to the joy the two of us used to find when we walked together? Something sadly amiss. Our spirits were shackled. Earlier in the week he said I was cynical and jaded, bitter and sarcastic – or I could often be those things. The blisters on my feet really hurt and yet he kept telling me I wanted to go skiing with him and his friend Dan the next day. He also told me he thought I was so intense he was surprised I didn't already have an ulcer. So sorry to disappoint!

Went to see *Quartet*, the movie based on Jean Rhys's book. A lovely movie which perfectly caught the tone of the book. A quietly intense sadness. Soft light and deep shadow, fragile hope and despair. Loneliness depicted with knife-edge poignancy. After the movie we drove down rue Ste-Catherine. Revellers staggered down the streets wearing party hats, tinsel wrapped around their necks, blowing party horns.

We went for a walk through Westmount Park near the library. I mentioned how I used to go there all the time when I lived on Somerled. He got upset because I never told him about it. Told me I kept too many things to myself and I didn't share. This was one of his pet themes of the week. I walked, looking down at the snow, hollows and craters filled with blue shadows. Returned to the motel via Lakeshore Drive as if following the yellow brick road. Drank Dom Perignon under curious conditions. We both fell asleep and the candles burnt down. It was a curious time.